

(c) isolating the leafy galls or shoot outgrows as the starting materials.

2. (Amended) [Method] The method for [the in vitro micropropagation of plants, which method comprises the method as claimed in] plant micropropagation and/or storage of germplasm of claim 1, further [characterized by] comprising the steps of:

(d) eliminating or inactivating the [micro-organism] microorganism that induces fasciation and/or the one or more fasciation-related factors derived from the [micro-organism] microorganism or derived from the infected and/or fasciated tissue;

(e) culturing the leafy gall or shoot outgrows in or on one or more suitable culture media to allow shoot and root development for obtaining plantlets; and

(f) transferring the plantlets thus obtained, [optionally after acclimatisation,] to conventional growing conditions to obtain regenerated plants.

3. (Amended) [Method] The method for [the preservation of plants or germplasm, which method comprises the method as claimed in] plant micropropagation and/or storage of germplasm of claim 1, further [characterized by] comprising the step of storing the leafy galls or shoot outgrows under growth limiting conditions.

4. (Amended) [Method] The method [as claimed in claims 1-3] of claim 1, wherein the fasciation-inducing [micro-organism] microorganism is *Rhodococcus fascians*.

5. (Amended) [Method] The method [as claimed in claim 3 and 4] of claim 3, wherein the growth limiting conditions comprise [low] temperatures of about 4 °C or less or [cryo-conserving conditions, such as] or wherein the growth limiting conditions comprise storage in liquid nitrogen.

6. (Amended) [Method] The method [as claimed in claims 1-5] of claim 1, wherein the plant material [comprises explants, such as] is selected from the group consisting of: leaf discs, organs, tissue fragments, seedlings, seeds, embryos, isolated cells, protoplasts, cell cultures and callus tissues.

7. (Amended) [Method] The method [as claimed in claims 1-6] of claim 1, wherein the plant material is material of species of the genera selected from the group consisting of: *Brassicaceae*, *Salicaceae*, *Compositae*, *Solanaceae*, *Scrophulariaceae*, *Liliaceae*, *Papaveraceae*, *Gramineae* and *Fabaceae*.

8. (Amended) [Method] The method for the [in vitro micropropagation of plants, which method comprises the method of] plant micropropagation and/or storage of germplasm of claim 3 [and optionally] further comprising: [the subsequent]

remov[all]ing or inactivat[ion]ing [of] microorganisms still present [micro-organisms] that induce fasciation and/or removing or inactivating fasciation related factors derived from the [micro-organism] microorganism or derived from the infected and/or fasciated tissue,